

Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

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FM AMEMBASSY DAKAR
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 4919
INFO AMEMBASSY ALGIERS
AMEMBASSY BAMAKO
AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM
AMEMBASSY MADRID
AMEMBASSY NOUAKCHOTT
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY RABAT
USMISSION USUN NY
CINCEUR

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 DAKAR 5372

E.O. 11652:GDS
TAGS: PINT, MR, SG
SUBJECT: SENEGALESE REACTION TO NEW REGIME IN MAURITANIA

1. MAURITANIA, THE COUP, THE NEW REGIME AND ITS ORIENTATION
CONTINUE TO BE A MAJOR FOCUS OF ATTENTION IN SENEGAL. MAIN
DAILY "LE SOLEIL" CARRIES FRONTPAGE ARTICLES DAILY, SUPPLE-
MENTED BY MORE DETAILED WIRE SERVICE AND SENEGALESE COVERAGE
INSIDE. STORY IS BEING PLAYED STRAIGHT, AND ANY NEWS
SHOWING NEW MAURITANIAN REGIME AS PAYING PARTICULAR ATTENTION
TO ITS OLD ALLIES MOROCCO AND FRANCE IS SINGLED OUT FOR
SPECIAL HIGHLIGHTING. JULY 12TH SOLEIL HAS PRESIDENT
SENGHOR SAYING THE SENEGALESE GOVERNMENT HAS TAKEN COGNIZANCE OF THE
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OF THE NEW SITUATION IN MAURITANIA, NOTING THAT THE
MILITARY COMMITTEE FOR NATIONAL RECOVERY HAS PLEDGED
TO RESPECT ALL INTERNATIONAL ENGAGEMENTS OF MAURITANIA.
SENGHOR QUOTE PARTICULARLY INSISTED ON MAURITANIA'S
ENGAGEMENT WITH REGARD TO THE OMVS TO WHICH GOS ATTACHES
THE GREATEST IMPORTANCE, END QUOTE.

2. WE HAVE SPOKEN IN LAST COUPLE OF DAYS WITH OFFICIALS IN PRESIDENCY AND PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICES. HERE ARE THEIR MAIN CONCERNS.

3. OMVS (SENEGAL RIVER VALLEY ORGANIZATION): ATTITUDE OF NEW MAURITANIAN REGIME TO OMVS AND ITS PROJECTS APPEARS TO BE OF OVERRIDING CONCERN TO GOS. EVEN PRIME MINISTER'S MILITARY ADVISER MENTIONED OMVS AS FIRST PRIORITY ISSUE. ADVISER IN PRESIDENCY NOTED THAT PRESIDENTS SENGHOR OF SENEGAL, OULD DADDAH OF MAURITANIA AND TRAORE OF MALI WERE SCHEDULED TO VISIT CANADA TOGETHER IN SEPTEMBER 1978 TO PUBLICIZE OMVS PROGRAMS AND GAIN ADDITIONAL FINANCIAL BACKING FOR THE DOLS 700 MILLION DAM AND IRRIGATION SYSTEM COMPLEX WHICH IS PLANNED FOR THE SENEGAL RIVER VALLEY. SENEGALESE ARE OBVIOUSLY WORRIED THAT COUP IN MAURITANIA WILL SLOW MOMENTUM OF THIS VITAL TRI-STATE (SENEGAL, MAURITANIA, MALI) COOPERATION.

4. ORIENTATION OF NEW MAURITANIAN GOVERNMENT: THIS IS MOST FREQUENTLY VOICED SENEGALESE CONCERN AFTER THE OMVS QUESTION. PRESIDENTIAL SOURCE, REFLECTING SENGHOR'S DEEP MISTRUST OF ALGERIA, NOTED THAT THE NEW MILITARY GOVERNMENT WAS OBVIOUSLY LEAVING ITS OPTIONS OPEN TOWARDS THE POLISARIO, PURSUIT OF THE WAR, AND ALGERIA. FOR SENEGALESE, THIS LEAVES OPEN THE POSSIBILITY THAT MAURITANIA MIGHT NOW SEEK A COMPROMISE AND SETTLEMENT WITH

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POLISARIO AND ALGERIA WHICH COULD HARM SENEGAL'S BASIC INTERESTS. ONE OF THESE BASIC INTERESTS WAS KEEPING ALGERIAN INFLUENCE AND HEGEMONY AS FAR AS POSSIBLE FROM SENEGAL'S BORDERS. (COMMENT: FOREGOING REPRESENTS SENEGALESE "WORSE CASE" ;832. MOST SENEGALESE GOVERNMENT OBSERVERS HAVE ALSO COMMENTED FAVORABLY ON THE APPARENTLY PRO-WESTERN ORIENTATION OF THE NEW GOVERNMENT IN MAURITANIA AND ITS REITERATED DESIRE TO MAINTAIN ITS STRONG LINKS WITH MOROCCO AND FRANCE.)

5. ANTI-BLACK OVERTONES: PRESIDENCY AND OTHER SOURCES NOTE THAT COUP IN MAURITANIA HAS COME AGAINST A BACKGROUND OF RISING BLACK MALAISE. THEY MAINTAIN THAT BLACKS HAVE BEEN LOSING POLITICAL POWER RECENTLY IN MAURITANIA AND BLACK TROOPS HAVE BEEN USED DISPROPORTIONATELY AS FRONTLINE FORCES WITH HIGH LOSSES AGAINST THE POLISARIO. ONE SOURCE CHARACTERIZED LISTS OF MEMBERS OF MILITARY COMMITTEE FOR NATIONAL RECOVERY AND OF NEW CABINET AS QUOTE WHITE AND MILITARY UNQUOTE. SOURCE ALSO INTERPRETED REFERENCE TO QUOTE NATIONAL DISMEMBERMENT UNQUOTE IN EARLY MILITARY COMMITTEE COMMUNIQUE AS A PREEMPTIVE MOVE AGAINST ANY BLACK SEPARATIST TENDENCIES IN

MAURITANIA.
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6. MISTRUST OF A MILITARY REGIME: ANOTHER SENEGALESE
REACTION WHICH COMES OUT STRONGLY IN CONVERSATIONS WITH
GOS OFFICIALS IS THE MISTRUST WHICH THIS STRONGLY
CIVILIAN-DOMINATED GOVERNMENT MANIFESTS WHEN A NEW
MILITARY REGIME APPEARS ON ITS DOORSTEP. PRIME MINISTER'S
MILITARY ADVISER, WHO EXPRESSED CONCERNS ALONG THIS LINE,
SAID THAT MILITARY REGIME IN MALI HAD NEVER REALLY
BOTHERED SENEGAL BECAUSE IT ALWAYS MAINTAIN A STRONGLY
CIVILIAN CHARACTER AND WORKED HARD TO KEEP UP GOOD
CONTACTS WITH SENEGAL. SAME MILITARY SOURCE ALLOWED THAT
GOS HAD MOVED TOOPS FROM ST. LOUIS AREA UP TOWARDS
MAURITANIAN BORDER UPON NEWS OF COUP.

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7. ASSURANCES FROM NEW MAURITANIAN REGIME: DURING FIRST FEW DAYS AFTER SUCCESSFUL COUP, SENEGALESE WERE RESENTFUL THAT THEY RECEIVED NO SPECIAL ASSURANCES FROM NEW REGIME. THIS WAS REMEDIED ON JULY 13 BY A SPECIAL MESSAGE FROM LT. COL. OULD SALEK TO PRESIDENT SENGHOR, CONVEYED BY MAURITANIAN AMBASSADOR. CONTENTS WERE NOT REVEALED, BUT FACT OF MESSAGE HELPS EASE SITUATION CONSIDERABLY.

8. COMMENT: IT IS OBVIOUS THAT THE MAURITANIAN REGIME'S COMMITMENT TO JOINT OMVS DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS WILL BE SENEGAL'S TOUCHSTONE FOR MEASURING THE FRIENDLINESS OF THE NEW GOVERNMENT IN NOUAKCHOTT. CONCERN ABOUT A HASTY COMPROMISE SETTLEMENT BETWEEN MAURITANIA AND POLISARIO/ALGERIA HAS NOT BEEN VOICED AT ALL PUBLICLY BUT CLEARLY PREYS ON THE MINDS OF SENGHOR'S ADVISERS. AT THE SAME TIME, HOWEVER, THERE IS CONSIDERABLY APPRECIATION FOR THE HERCULEAN TASK WHICH LT. COLONEL OULD SALEK AND HIS REGIME FACE IN DEALING WITH THEIR ECONOMIC, FINANCIAL, MILITARY AND POLITICAL PROBLEMS. HENCE WHILE SENEGALESE OFFICIALS PROFESS TO SEE ABOVE CONCERNS AS REAL, THEY ALSO STRESS THAT THEIR BASIC ATTITUDE IS ONE OF "WAIT AND SEE."
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